

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02

ORM-02 /063 W

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R 092152Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 421

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE OTTAWA 2806

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EGEN, CA

SUBJ: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BILL PASSES PENULTIMATE TEST

REF: OTTAWA 2571

1. GOC CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BILL SURVIVED RETENTIONIST EFFORTS AT AMENDMENTS DURING BILL'S REPORTS STAGE. KEY VOTE CAME ON PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO MAINTAIN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR MURDERERS OF POLICEMEN AND PRISON GUARDS, WHICH DEFEATED 132-117, ALMOST DOUBLE THE SECOND-READING MARGIN (REFTEL). FIVE LIBERAL MP'S WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY VOTED FOR RETENTION SWITCHED TO ABOLITIONIST SIDE, ONE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE MOVED FROM ABOLITION TO RETENTION AND ONE PC MP WHO HAD BEEN ABSENT AT SECOND READING RETURNED TO VOTE RETENTIONIST. TEN MP'S WHO VOTED ON SECOND READING, FIVE ON EACH SIDE, WERE ABSENT THIS TIME.

2. RETENTIONIST SPOKESMAN CHARGED THAT GOC PRESSURED RETENTIONISTS WITHIN LIBERAL PARTY RANKS TO SWITCH ON GROUNDS GOC DEFEAT ON VOTE WOULD LEAD TO GOVERNMENT'S FALL. GOC JUSTICE MINISTER BASFORD DENIED THIS, EXPLAINING SWITCHES AS RESULTING FROM RECOGNITION BY THOSE WHO DID SO THAT DEFEAT OF BILL ON AN AMENDMENT WHICH VIOLATED PRINCIPLE OF ABOLITION WOULD HAVE MADE MOCKERY OF PARLIA-
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MENTARY PROCEDURE ONCE THAT PRINCIPLE ACCEPTED AS SECOND

READING.

3. WHERE THE TRUTH LIES IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW. CERTAINLY GOC HAD DEVELOPED SEVERE CASE OF NERVES IN LAST FEW DAYS BEFORE REPORT STAGE VOTE. THERE WAS SOME FEAR WITHIN GOC THAT SOME QUEBEC LIBERALS WOULD SWITCH TO RETENTION SIDE AS SPITE VITE AGAINST GOC HANDLING OF QUESTION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL IN MONTREAL AIRSPACE. PM ADVISER KIRBY CONFIDED TO POLCOUNS THREE DAYS BEFORE VOTE THAT GOC HEAD-COUNT OF MP'S SHOWED THAT 8-VOTE MARGIN COULD WELL SLIP TO 3 AT REPORT STAGE AND MIGHT DISAPPEAR. IN THE EVENT, NO LIBERALS SWITCHED FROM ABOLITION TO RETENTION RANKS, AND EVEN IF THOSE FIVE WHO SWITCHED THE OTHER WAY HAD NOT DONE SO, THE PRO-ABOLITION MARGIN WOULD HAVE HELD AT FIVE. EVEN ARDENT RETENTIONISTS NOW ABANDONING HOPE OF PREVENTING ABOLITION FROM BECOMING LAW OF LAND. FINAL THIRD READING EXPECTED JULY 13 FOLLOWING WHICH COMMONS EXPECTED TO RISE FOR THE SUMMER, WITH GOC BREATHING SOMEWHAT EASIER THAN IT HAS IN RECENT PAST.
ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAW, CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, LEGISLATIVE BILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA02806
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760266-0718
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760774/aaaacmxg.tel
Line Count: 81
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 OTTAWA 2571
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <03 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BILL PASSES PENULTIMATE TEST
TAGS: PINT, EGEN, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006